



Iowa Outdoors

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

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Aug. 29, 2006

1. Landowners, Tenants Begin Registration September 1 for Deer and Turkey Tags
2. Hunting Seasons Begin Sept. 1
3. This Year's Duck Hunting Forecast Offers Mixed Bag of Good and Bad News – by Lowell Washburn
4. Historic House at Black Hawk State Park Now Available to Rent
5. Will 2006 Be Remembered as Year of the Cicada? – by Lowell Washburn
6. Fall Migration Begins – Blue-winged Teal Invade Iowa – by Lowell Washburn
7. River Cleanup Grants Announced, More to Come
8. State Preserves Board to Meet Sept. 8 in Boone County
9. Natural Resource-based Opportunity Grants Awarded to 15 Iowa Projects
10. Iowa Fishing Report

LANDOWNERS, TENANTS BEGIN REGISTRATION SEPTEMBER 1 FOR DEER AND TURKEY TAGS

DES MOINES – A new rule requires landowners, tenants and eligible family members to register their farm unit with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources beginning September 1 in order to qualify for free and reduced fee deer and turkey hunting licenses. The electronic licensing system will only issue Landowner-Tenant (LOT) licenses to those who are registered.

This new requirement is intended to ensure only qualified landowners, tenants and their eligible family members receive the free or reduced fee licenses. Online registration takes only a few minutes to complete. Customers click on the appropriate box and answer a few simple questions and submit the form.

“The preferred method of registration is online because the system is designed to keep errors to a minimum and to allow the LOT tags to be sold immediately upon completion,” said Mick Klemesrud with the Iowa DNR.

Go to www.iowadnr.com and click on the Landowner Tenant Registration button on the right column. Registration is also available through the mail, but requires 10

business days after it is received by the DNR to process the form. Errors on mailed registration forms will further delay the process.

Individuals who have not obtained a hunting, fishing or trapping license in the past five years, must first call the DNR at 515-281-5918 to establish a customer record before registering online.

There were more than 90,500 LOT licenses distributed to Iowa deer hunters last year.

For more information, contact Mick Klemesrud at 515-281-8653.

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HUNTING SEASONS BEGIN SEPT. 1

Iowa hunting seasons kick-off September 1, when rabbit and squirrel seasons open statewide, and based on the early returns from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) August roadside survey, cottontail hunters should have good hunting this year.

“The southern third of Iowa will offer the best rabbit numbers this fall,” said Todd Bogenschutz, upland wildlife research biologist for the Iowa DNR.

Techniques common for rabbit hunting include stomping brush piles, walking slowly through abandoned farmsteads or along brushy fence rows or wooded draws. The best form of rabbit hunting is done with the companionship of one or more beagles, Bogenschutz said. “Beagles and other trailing dogs can increase your success and improve the quality of the hunt,” he said.

Rabbit season is open through Feb. 28, 2007. The daily bag limit is 10, with a possession limit of 20. Shooting hours are from sunrise to sunset.

Hunters may view the DNR’s roadside counts of cottontails in early September on the DNR’s website at www.iowadnr.com/wildlife/files/uproad.html.

Hunters also will begin pursuing squirrels on Friday.

“Squirrel numbers are more difficult to estimate because we do not survey our squirrel populations, but statewide, numbers should be similar to last year,” said Todd Gosselink, forest wildlife research biologist with the DNR. Squirrel populations typically peak following good mast years. There was a fair mast crop across eastern and southern Iowa last fall.

“Although the mast production was average last year, hunting opportunities for squirrels are excellent in Iowa because hunting pressure is low,” Gosselink said. Squirrel hunting is best done in one of two ways: the sit and wait technique and the walking slowly through the timber technique, he said.

The sit and wait technique is used near likely feeding areas such as beneath oak, walnut, or hickory trees or corn-forest edges. The still-hunting technique is employed by slowly walking through forested areas and stopping frequently to watch for feeding squirrels. The best hunting times usually are during the morning and afternoon feeding hours.

Fox squirrels can be found anywhere there are a few acres of trees, but gray squirrels are generally limited to the heavily forested areas in eastern and southern Iowa.

Interest in squirrel hunting has declined even though squirrel habitat has increased over the past 30 years. One factor is hunter focus has shifted to pursuing other species, like turkey and deer. Another factor is Iowa’s shrinking rural population. In the 1960s, Iowa had 150,000 squirrel hunters who harvested more than 1 million squirrels. In 2005, 35,400 squirrel hunters harvested 217,000 squirrels.

Squirrel hunting season runs through Jan. 31, 2007. The daily bag limit is six [fox and gray combined], and the possession limit is 12. There are no restrictions on shooting hours.

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THIS YEAR'S DUCK HUNTING FORECAST OFFERS MIXED BAG OF GOOD AND BAD NEWS

By Lowell Washburn

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

Fall hunting seasons are almost here. With this year's duck opener barely three weeks out, Iowa waterfowlers are wondering just what to expect when they finally bag the decoys and head to area wetlands.

Making meaningful predictions for the upcoming waterfowl season is always tricky business. This year the task is nigh unto impossible, says DNR Waterfowl Biologist, Guy Zenner. The good news is that, come autumn, generous numbers of ducks will be flying south out of prairie Canada. The bad news is that most Iowa wetlands may be dry when they get here.

"There's little doubt that we'll be looking at a good fall flight coming out of Canada," said Zenner. "When ducks arrived on prairie Canada last spring, they encountered good to very good wetland habitat conditions across most of Saskatchewan

and southern Manitoba. Those are key breeding areas, and Iowa gets a large number of ducks from those regions."

"Here in Iowa, this spring's breeding pair survey was down somewhat, and I expect overall duck production to be lower as well," said Zenner. "Water levels remained adequate during April and May, and brood survival was good. The rains stopped during the summer, and by mid-July habitat conditions were changing. Wetlands began drying up."

Water levels continued to decline across most of the state during August. Currently, most wetlands in the prairie pothole region of north central and northwestern Iowa are dry or nearly dry. Many potholes have been dry for more than six weeks and have become completely revegetated with duck preferred, moist soil plants, such as smartweed.

Although few duck hunters are likely to view current marsh conditions as favorable, this summer's lack of water may offer mixed blessings says Zenner.

Most of the ponds across northern Iowa have been full of water for more than a decade. But in order to function properly, prairie wetlands need dry cycles as well as wet. That's when marshes recharge and revegetate. And although it may be hard for hunters to take in the short term, regenerated marshlands have a much greater diversity of plant and invertebrate animal life when water returns. Potholes that are dry today will offer greatly improved habitat conditions and hunting opportunities during future seasons.

Although this year's duck hunting forecast is far from rosy, Zenner cautions hunters not to become overly pessimistic. Fall weather patterns are classically fickle and substantial rainfall could be just around the corner. With the state's flood control reservoirs --- Red Rock, Rathbun, Saylorville, and Coralville --- currently hosting thousands of acres of mature smartweed; the stage is set. A few inches of water is all that is needed to turn these dry backwaters into a food rich, waterfowl paradise. Zenner also notes that many of the larger public wetlands such as Otter Creek, Lake Odessa, Green Island, Sweet Marsh, and Big Marsh also enjoyed excellent production of moist soil food plants during the past summer.

"If we do get substantial fall rains, duck hunting could be excellent," said Zenner. "If we don't get those rains, hunting conditions will be challenging across much of the state."

"This is definitely a year for preseason scouting. Hunters need to visit the areas they plan to use this fall," Zenner added. "No one wants to be one of those hunters who shows up in the dark on opening morning and discovers that the wetland they planned to hunt is bone dry."

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HISTORIC HOUSE AT BLACK HAWK STATE PARK NOW AVAILABLE TO RENT

LAKE VIEW – The former residence of the state park attendant at Black Hawk State Park, built by the Civil Conservation Corps in the 1930s, is available for public use as a cabin. Sitting a few blocks from the lake, the cabin can sleep up to 10 people, has an outside patio and a fire ring with a grill. An open house is scheduled from 12 to 2 p.m., Sept. 10.

“This is really a unique opportunity for anyone interested in a different kind of camping experience,” said Ryan O’Neill, manager of Black Hawk State Park. “A lot of improvements were made to the cabin by park staff and by our AmeriCorps employee, Luke Wright, to make this project happen. Now, we can open it up for the public to come and enjoy it.”

The cabin has four bedrooms and one and a half baths. O’Neill said it is available immediately by calling 712-657-8712. Due to the renovation, the cabin is not currently listed among those available on the DNR reservation website. “We are planning to have this available to reserve like the other cabins beginning next year,” he said.

With a full size kitchen, furnace and air conditioning, the historic house is much larger than other cabins in state parks. It rents for \$100 per night and has a two-night minimum. The weekly rate is \$600. The cabin is handicap accessible and does not allow smoking inside. Guests must provide all their own linens for beds.

For more information, contact O’Neill at 712-657-8722.

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[Electronic photo available]

WILL 2006 BE REMEMBERED AS YEAR OF THE CICADA?

By Lowell Washburn

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

The Dog Days of late summer have arrived. As always, summer's end has been accompanied by the signature sound of buzzing locusts.

More properly referred to as cicadas, these huge highly vocal insects are a normal part of our late summer landscape. But this year, Iowans from across the state have reported seeing and hearing an abnormally high number of these intriguing creatures. In select locations cicadas have recently emerged by the hundreds and are covering

outbuildings, trees, and sidewalks. The phenomena has been especially noticeable in the state's northern counties where from Cedar Falls to Spencer, 2006 will likely be remembered as the 'Year of the Cicada'.

"Since no one is actually counting the cicadas that emerge each year, we really can't say much about exact numbers," says Ken Holscher, professor of entomology at Iowa State University. "What we can say is that there is a likelihood of higher [cicada] numbers simply because of a series of mild winters that leads to greater survival. Anytime we have even one or more mild winters, numbers are likely to go up. In Iowa, we've had several [warmer winters] in a row. The fact that some people may be seeing the result of that is no surprise."

Although around 200 species of cicadas exist in North America, only two species -- the annual and periodical cicadas -- are found in Iowa. Their life cycle begins as females deposit eggs in the slits of tree branches. As the eggs hatch, cicada nymphs drop to the ground and burrow into the soil, sometimes going as deep as six feet, where they subsist on the juices found in tree roots. Depending on species, nymphs may live underground for as long as 17 years before reappearing on the surface where they split their backs and emerge as adults. Adults sing, mate, and lay eggs until they are eventually killed by autumn frost.

"While just about everyone is familiar with the sound of cicadas, most people don't realize is that only the males buzz," says Holscher. "Cicadas have excellent hearing and the song has but one purpose which is to attract mates."

But Holscher notes that the cicada's buzzing may attract more than females. Giant, cicada killer wasps also have excellent hearing and are quick to key on the unique sound.

Upon locating a singing male, the wasp quickly delivers a potent dose of venom that fully paralyzes, but does not kill, its victim. Within one to two seconds, the hapless cicada is rendered completely immobile. Tightly grasping its victim, the wasp begins an aerial descent that leads from treetop to ground den. Upon reaching the entrance of its nest, the killer wasp drags the paralyzed cicada down the main tunnel and then deposits its prize in one of several empty underground chambers. The wasp then attaches a single egg to its helpless prey. When the egg hatches, the larval wasp slowly consumes the live cicada. The wasp larva emerges as an adult cicada killer the following spring.

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FALL MIGRATION BEGINS - BLUE-WINGED TEAL INVADE IOWA

By Lowell Washburn

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

In sharp contrast to most species of migratory waterfowl, the annual passage of blue-winged teal is highly predictable.

By the time the golden rod tops have begun turning bright yellow, which is happening right now, the first adventuresome flocks of southbound teal will have already landed on local wetlands.

Of all North American waterfowl, blue-winged teal are the very first to migrate. Most migrations begin on clear days at sunset and continue through the night. In the prairie pothole country of northern Iowa, blue-wing numbers generally peak during the last week of August or first week of September. Although overall numbers diminish from there, new flocks continue arriving in the state through early October.

Abundant and ever popular with hunters, no duck offers better table fare – at any time of the year – than September blue-wings. The success of Iowa's early hunting days rises or falls with the availability of migrating blue-wings.

Notoriously restless, blue-wings seldom remain in one place for long. In spite of mild weather or abundant food sources, many of the flocks that arrived in Iowa during late August will be exploring the Gulf Coast wetlands of Louisiana by Labor Day weekend. Teal banded in Iowa have been recovered less than a month later by duck hunters in Jamaica, Venezuela and Guatemala.

For migrating blue-wings, there's good reason to be so anxious. No other species of duck or goose travels faster or farther down the flyways. Most teal will journey at least as far south as Central America or northern South America. Significant numbers will even travel below the equator to winter in Brazil and Peru --- an incredible distance of 4,000 miles from the summer breeding grounds.

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RIVER CLEANUP GRANTS ANNOUNCED, MORE TO COME

DES MOINES — Volunteers from four Iowa communities will clean up their lakes and rivers this summer with help from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The DNR announced second-round grant-recipients in a new watershed cleanup program.

Third-round applications are now being accepted.

Organizations from Boone County, Council Bluffs, Eldora and Woodbury County received second-round CLEAR (Community Leaders Enhancing Area River) mini-grants

worth up to \$1,000. The money will fund volunteer litter cleanups on local bodies of water.

Five other community groups (from Carter Lake, Des Moines, Dixon, Elkader and Oskaloosa) received CLEAR grants during the first round of applications this spring. Other organizations interested in conducting their own cleanups are encouraged to apply for the third round of grants, accepted on an ongoing basis until Dec. 31. Grants are worth \$1,000. Visit www.iowater.net.

Second Round Grant Recipients:

- Siouxland Human Investment Partnership, Aug. 4, 2006.
- Missouri River Relief, Council Bluffs: Back to the River, Inc, Aug. 22-23, 2006.
- Keep Boone County Beautiful, Boone County: Dragoon River Romp, Sept. 23, 2006.
- Iowa River Greenbelt Resource Trust, Steamboat Rock to Pine Lake State Park: Iowa River Cleanup, September – November 2006.

First Round Grant Recipients:

- Mahaska County Ikes, Oskaloosa: South Skunk River Cleanup, May 20 – June 6, 2006.
- Clayton County Conservation Board, Elkader: Tidying the Turkey, Aug. 19, 2006.
- Friends of the Wapsi Center, Inc., Dixon: Grove to Grove Lower Wapsipinicon River Cleanup Project, Aug. 25, 2006.
- Iowa Whitewater Coalition, Inc., Des Moines: Clean Rivers Team, May – November 2006.
- Carter Lake Preservation Society, Carter Lake: Carter Lake Cleanup, April 14, 2007.

For more information, contact Brandon Harland at (515) 281-3150 or at brandon.harland@dnr.state.ia.us.

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STATE PRESERVES BOARD TO MEET SEPT. 8 IN BOONE COUNTY

Boone – The State Preserves Advisory Board will meet at 1 p.m. Sept. 8, at the Iowa Department of Natural Resources Boone Research Station, 1436 255th St., south of Boone. The research station is adjacent to the south entrance to Ledges State Park. The meeting is open to the public.

Board members will meet at 9:45 a.m., on Sept. 8, at Seven Hill County Park for a tour of a potential preserve. The park is at the intersection of 250th Street and M Avenue, on the southwest edge of Jefferson. The tour is open to the public.

Members of the State Preserves Advisory Board are Deborah Lewis, Carl Kurtz, Laura Jackson, Scott Moats, Armando Rosales, Cynthia Peterson and Liz Christiansen, deputy director of the DNR

A more detailed agenda is available on the Iowa DNR's website www.iowadnr.com under State Parks / Preserves, then click on Preserves Advisory Board link.

The following is the meeting agenda.

- Introduction of New Board Member
- Approve Agenda
- Approve Minutes of July Meeting
- Perkins Prairie Discussion
- Preserves Update
- Goal Setting
- Open Discussion
- January Meeting and 2007 Schedule

For more information, contact John Pearson at 515-281-3891.

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NATURAL RESOURCE-BASED OPPORTUNITY GRANTS AWARDED TO 15 IOWA PROJECTS

DES MOINES – Fifteen local grass roots projects working to stimulate natural resource economic development and jobs in rural Iowa were awarded \$300,000 in state funds through the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. Projects receiving funding ranged from local efforts to expand tourism through building cabins and developing local outdoor recreation guide books to innovative bio-energy projects using animal waste, solar, wind, wood and crop waste.

“Natural resources offer unlimited opportunities for sustainable use, whether from our forest and prairies to our rivers and lakes,” said John Walkowiak, chief of the Iowa DNR's forestry bureau.

Grants were awarded to Cedar Valley Resources Conservation and Development Areas (RC&D), of Charles City, for small solar/wind electrical generation (\$15,600); Geode RC&D, of Burlington, for evaluating the potential for bio-energy in Washington County (\$8,420); Golden Hills RC&D, of Oakland, for a feasibility study for developing a Terra Bio-Diesel Refinery (\$43,500) and developing Loess Hills themed tours and day trips (\$5,240).

Grants were also awarded to Iowa Heartland RC&D, of Ankeny, for enhancing the Madison County winery with constructing four season caves (\$25,000); Iowa Lakes

RC&D, of Spencer, for organic market, cafe and deli development (\$25,000) and conducting a watchable wildlife assessment (\$5,000).

Other areas receiving grants include Iowa Valley RC&D, of Williamsburg, for developing a outdoor recreational guide series for the Iowa River corridor (\$25,000); Limestone Bluffs RC&D, of Maquoketa, for developing wood and corn energy pellets (\$21,500); Pathfinders RC&D, of Fairfield, for preparing a marketing analysis for a Iowa Forest Heritage center at Lacey-Keosauqua State Park (\$12,500); Prairie Partners RC&D, of Humboldt, for recreational cabin installation in Hancock, Kossuth, Pocahontas and Calhoun counties (\$25,000).

Grants were also awarded to Prairie Rivers RC&D, of Ames, for a feasibility study of a bio-refinery in central Iowa (\$45,000) and for small natural resources based business training (\$5,240); Prairie Winds RC&D, of Garner, for Crystal Lake cabins in Hancock County (\$23,000); and Southern Iowa RC&D, of Creston, for development of a southern Iowa regional vision and strategic action plan (\$15,000).

“All projects must provide dollar for dollar non state funding match and be completed by June 30, 2008,” Walkowiak said.

Grant money came from a special \$300,000 legislative appropriation from any interest or earnings on moneys in the federal economic stimulus and jobs holding account to the Department of Natural Resources for the development of grass roots natural resource based development. Because of limited funding, a competitive process working jointly with Resources Conservation and Development Areas and Soil and Water Conservation Districts was employed. Thirty-four proposals were submitted requesting \$744,823 in matching grant funds.

For more information, contact Walkowiak at 515-242-5966 or by email at john.walkowiak@dnr.state.ia.us

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